



SHARING HORIZONS

Art from the collections of
Central Bank of Ireland and
the European Central Bank

FOREWORD

CHRISTINE LAGARDE,
PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

I am delighted to present *Sharing Horizons*, an exhibition of Irish art at the European Central Bank, organised together with the Central Bank of Ireland and the Embassy of Ireland to Germany.

The works on display span more than a century of Irish creativity, from evocative scenes of rural life to bold contemporary explorations of identity and belonging. What gives these works their force, whether in paint and print or through the lens, is that they blur the line between the personal and the universal. You see the world through the eyes of the artist – and find your own world in it.

An Irish landscape stirs a memory closer to home; an urban scene brings you back to a street in your own city. And in that recognition, what is Irish and what is European become one and the same. You feel closer to your fellow citizens, with a stronger sense of the community we all belong to.

The Irish have an old saying: *ní neart go cur le chéile* – there is no strength without unity. And as old sayings go, it happens to perfectly capture the spirit of Europe today. Enjoy the exhibition, and the extraordinary Irish talent it celebrates.

FOREWORD

GABRIEL MAKHLOUF,
GOVERNOR, CENTRAL BANK OF IRELAND

It is an honour to present this exhibition of Irish art at the European Central Bank, in conjunction with the Embassy of Ireland to Germany, a celebration that speaks to both artistic excellence and our shared European endeavour.

The works gathered here represent a distinctive vision of Irish creativity. Each artist brought a unique perspective to their craft: Keating's social realism capturing the dignity of labour and community; Swanzy's modernist explorations of form and colour; Henry's evocative landscapes imbuing the Irish countryside with luminous intensity, and much more. Taken in aggregate these pieces from the collections of the Central Bank of Ireland and the European Central

Bank testify to Ireland's rich cultural contribution to the European artistic tradition, and that tradition's impact on the work of Irish artists.

This exhibition arrives at a particularly resonant moment. As Ireland holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, we are reminded of our profound interconnection as Europeans.

In this spirit, we are grateful to President Christine Lagarde for providing this platform to celebrate Irish culture within these halls.

RÉAMHRÁ

GABRIEL MAKHLOUF, GOBHARNÓIR, BANC CEANNAIS NA hÉIREANN

Is mór an onóir dom an taispeántas seo d'ealaín na hÉireann a chur i láthair i mBanc Ceannais Eorpach, i gcomhar le hAmbasáid na hÉireann sa Ghearmáin, ceiliúradh a léiríonn barr feabhais ealaíne agus ár gcomhiarracht Eorpach araon.

Léiríonn na saothair atá bailithe anseo fíis ar leith de chruthaitheacht na hÉireann. Tá dearcadh uathúil ar a gceird curtha ar fáil ag gach ealaíontóir: réalachas sóisialta Keating lena gcuirtear dínit an tsaothair agus an phobail in iúl; iniúchtaí nua-aoiseacha Swanzy ar fhoirm agus ar dhath; tírdhreacha allabhracha Henry ag cur déine lonrúil i dtírdhreach na hÉireann, agus go leor eile. Le chéile, taispeánann na píosáí seo ó bhailiúcháin Bhanc Ceannais na hÉireann agus an Bhainc Ceannais Eorpaigh an méid

a chuireann saibhreas cultúrtha na hÉireann leis an traidisiún ealaíne Eorpach, mar aon le tionchar an traidisiúin sin ar shaothar ealaíontóirí na hÉireann.

Tagann an taispeántas seo ag tráth thar a bheith suntasach. Agus Éire i mbun Uachtaránacht Chomhairle an Aontais Eorpaigh, cuirtear i gcuimhne dúinn ár ndlíthnasc mar Eorpaigh.

Sa mheon sin, táimid buíoch den Uachtarán Christine Lagarde as an ardán seo a chur ar fáil chun cultúr na hÉireann a cheiliúradh laistigh de na hallaí seo.

INTRODUCTION

In the second half of 2026, Ireland takes over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the eighth time. At a pivotal time for Europe, Ireland will lead the EU's policy agenda, drive consensus and help deliver results for citizens across the bloc.

Ireland's Presidency is also an opportunity to celebrate Irish identity and culture, sharing its rich heritage, history and art with communities at home and across Europe.

Sharing Horizons: Art from the collections of Central Bank of Ireland and the European Central Bank is part of that celebration.

It is a visual journey into what makes Ireland unique; a celebration of its voice and creativity on the European stage.

The exhibition features work by Irish artists spanning the period from the 19th to the 21st century, offering visitors an opportunity to explore art as a unifying force in today's increasingly fragmented world. Here, art serves as more than mere expression. It becomes a meeting ground, a bridge connecting regions and cultures. It sparks a dialogue that transcends language barriers, reflecting the shared challenges and triumphs of contemporary Europe.

Welcome to a celebration of Irish art through Sharing Horizons!

RÉAMHRÁ

Sa dara leath de 2026, glacann Éire Uachtaránacht Chomhairle an Aontais Eorpaigh den ochtú huair. Ag tráth cinniúnach don Eoraip, beidh Éire i gceannas ar chlár oibre beartais an Aontais, spreagfaidh sí comhdhearcadh agus cuideoidh sí le torthaí a bhaint amach do shaoránaigh ar fud an Aontais.

Is deis í Uachtaránacht na hÉireann freisin chun féiniúlacht agus cultúr na hÉireann a cheiliúradh, agus ár n-oidhreacht shaibhir, stair agus ealaín a roinnt leis an bpobal sa bhaile agus ar fud na hEorpa.

Is cuid den cheiliúradh sin é **Léaslínte Comhroinnte: Ealaín ó bhailiúcháin Bhanc Ceannais na hÉireann agus an Bhainc Ceannais Eorpaigh.**

Is turas físiúil é ar a ndéanann Éire uathúil, ceiliúradh ar a guth agus ar a cruthaitheacht ar stáitse na hEorpa.

Tá saothar le healaíontóirí Éireannacha a mhair ón 19ú haois go dtí an 21ú haois sa taispeántas seo, rud a thugann deis do chuirteoirí an ealaín a bhlaiseadh mar fhórsa aontaithe i saol an lae inniu atá ag éirí níos ilroinnte. Anseo, feidhmíonn an ealaín mar níos mó ná léiriú amháin. Is droichead í a nascann réigiúin agus cultúir le chéile. Spreagtar idirphlé a théann thar bhacainní teanga, agus léirítear na dúshláin agus na buanna comhroinnte a bhaineann leis an Eoraip chomhaimseartha.

Fáilte go dtí ceiliúradh ar ealaín na hÉireann le Léaslínte Comhroinnte!

WHAT IS IT TO BE IRISH?

CAD IS BRÍ LE BHEITH ÉIREANNACH?

Foundations of a Visual Identity

Ireland's identity is profoundly shaped by its rugged landscapes, where luminous light dances across untamed panoramas, and powerful Atlantic winds carve their mark on the terrain. This unique natural spirit has long inspired artists, challenging them to capture a land that feels both timeless and fleeting. Through the works of Ireland's most iconic painters – Paul Henry, John Lavery, Mary Swanzy, Kathy Prendergast, Seán Keating, Louis Le Brocquy, Michael Craig-Martin, and Jack B. Yeats – this exhibition invites viewers to explore the essence of Ireland's cultural and artistic heritage while confronting a central question: *What is it to be Irish?*

This question, so simple yet deeply layered, resonates throughout the exhibition. What does it mean to belong to a place defined by its history, its people, and its landscapes?

How can a nation that has evolved from relative isolation to global interconnectedness remain rooted in its traditions?

At the heart of this exploration is Belfast-born Paul Henry (1876–1958), one of the most celebrated figures in Irish art. His evocative oil paintings immortalize the sweeping landscapes of Connemara and Achill Island, presenting bold forms and representational colours that have become emblematic of Ireland's visual identity. Yet Henry's work goes beyond aesthetic beauty. His brushstrokes breathe life into rural rhythms, celebrating the symbiosis between people and the land, embracing techniques developed in Paris's academies and beyond. Scenes of potato digging, turf cutting, seaweed harvesting, and fishing evoke the vitality of everyday life, as captured in *The Lake in the Bog* from the Central Bank of Ireland collection.

While Ireland's literary achievements have long been celebrated globally, its visual arts have more gradually gained recognition. Since the mid-twentieth century, exhibitions in Paris and New York, alongside the establishment of museums and galleries across Ireland, have propelled Irish visual art into the international spotlight, broadening the country's reputation as a hub of artistic innovation.

Spanning works from the 1920s to the 1970s, this exhibition serves as a bridge between Ireland's artistic past and its exploration of modern, post-modern, and contemporary art. It traces the shifting landscape of Irish creativity, reflecting a nation that has undergone profound social and cultural transformation.

The journey begins with a focus on the early twentieth century, a formative era for Ireland's visual identity. Against the backdrop of rising cultural nationalism and seismic events like the First World War and the 1916 Easter Rising, artists such as John Lavery and Seán Keating captured a nation in transition, providing vivid records of upheaval and rebirth. Central to this search for identity was the West of Ireland, which

many artists regarded as the definitive symbol of an "authentic" Ireland.

The enduring permanence of the Irish landscape remained a constant factor, even as the country experienced shifting political and cultural borders. Through the vibrant works of artists such as Michael Flaherty, Ivan Sutton, and Mary Swanzy, the exhibition explores the dialogue between tradition and modernity. Swirling green pastures meet abstract urban spaces, while the western seafront pulses with energy, rendered in palettes that convey the vitality of contemporary life.

As you move through this exhibition, allow yourself to ask: *What does it mean to be Irish?* Is it a connection to the land? A sense of community? A shared heritage or a creative spirit that transcends borders? A common horizon, regardless of location, social status or difference?

Sharing Horizons invites you to step into this narrative, to uncover Ireland through its art, and to celebrate the enduring spirit of a nation that continues to define itself through creativity.

PAUL HENRY

Belfast-born Paul Henry (1876–1958) stands as a towering figure in Irish art. His evocative oil paintings distil the vigour of Ireland’s West, immortalizing the sweeping landscapes of Connemara and Achill Island. Paul and his wife Grace Henry arrived on Achill Island for a two-week holiday and stayed there for nine years in total. It was there that a new modern language for the representation of the West began to emerge.

Henry’s depictions of rural life also evidently drew inspiration from the likes of Jean-François Millet, a French painter and founder of the Barbizon school, known for his realist portrayals of traditional farmers. Combining Millet’s approach with influences from early Van Gogh, whom he studied during his time in Paris, Henry adapted 19th-century French

realism to modern Ireland. His work challenged traditional representations of the western seaboard, offering an authentic glimpse into the harsh realities of rural life in the West.

With bold forms and vibrant colours, Henry’s work conjures a groundbreaking vision of Ireland’s lakes, mountains, and humble cottages. Yet, his art goes beyond the scenery as Henry’s brush and paint palette capture the rhythms of life there and the symbiosis between people and the “*paysage*” (landscape). Scenes of potato digging, turf cutting, seaweed harvesting, and fishing give us glimpses of the arduous day-to-day country and coastal existence. These cameos breathe life into his work, as seen in masterpieces like *The Lake in the Bog* from the Central Bank of Ireland collection.



The Lake in the Bog
1935-1938
Oil on Canvas

© Estate of Paul Henry, IVARO Dublin, 2026

SEÁN KEATING

Seán Keating (1889-1977) was a prominent Irish realist painter whose work vividly captures the socio-political and cultural transformations of Ireland in the early 20th century. His painting *Three Men and a Wheelbarrow* exemplifies Keating's dedication to portraying the everyday lives and labour of ordinary Irish folk.

Influenced by the communities of Ireland's southern region, Limerick-born artist Seán Keating often depicted scenes that reflected the resilience of pastoral labour and the enduring spirit of the Irish people.

In *Three Men and a Wheelbarrow*, the figures are rendered with a stark realism that reflects both their physical toil and their unwavering commitment to overcome their burdens. The wheelbarrow, a humble yet essential tool, becomes a symbol of travel, resilience, and of human brotherhood.

Keating's ability to imbue his subjects with both individuality and archetypal significance highlights his nuanced understanding of the complexities of rural Irish life during a period of national rebirth.



Three Men and a Wheelbarrow
mid 20th Century
Pencil Gouache

© Estate of Seán Keating, IVARO Dublin, 2026

IVAN SUTTON

Ivan Sutton is a contemporary Irish painter renowned for his atmospheric and lively depictions of the Irish coastline, particularly the rugged maritime landscapes of the West. His oeuvre is characterized by a distinctive “wet-on-wet” technique, utilizing a palette knife and bold impasto brushwork to capture the kinetic energy of the Atlantic. Sutton’s work often focuses on the interplay between light and water, frequently featuring traditional Galway Hookers, working harbours, and the shifting skies of Connemara.

While his subjects – traditional boats and rural shores – give a nod to the romanticism of Paul Henry, Sutton’s execution is decidedly more visceral and spontaneous. His paintings convey the weather and the salt-spray through thick, textured layers of paint. By blending representational accuracy with a near-abstract sense of movement, Sutton’s work serves as a bridge between the traditional landscape genre and a modern, sensory appreciation of the Irish elements, making him a staple in contemporary Irish maritime art.



Hookers Sailing Off Kinvara, Co. Galway
2003
Oil on Canvas

© Ivan Sutton, IVARO Dublin, 2026

MICHAEL FLAHERTY

Michael Flaherty is a contemporary Irish artist whose work is celebrated for its raw, expressionistic energy and its deep connection to the topography of the South and West of Ireland. His oeuvre is defined by a heavy, sculptural use of paint, often applied with a palette knife to create a jagged, tactile surface that mirrors the wildness of the Irish landscape. In *Clouds over Bandon*, Flaherty moves away from his frequent coastal themes to capture the inland atmosphere of County Cork, using his signature impasto style to give weight and form to the shifting Irish sky.

His work is characterized by a vibrant, often unexpected colour palette: electric blues, deep ochres, and vivid greens. Such colours reject traditional pastoral realism in favour of an emotional, sensory response to the land. Rather than focusing on fine detail, Flaherty prioritizes the “soul” of a place, utilizing broad, confident strokes to convey the movement of wind and light. His paintings exist at the intersection of representation and abstraction, offering a modern interpretation of the Irish countryside that feels both ancient and urgently contemporary.



Clouds over Bandon
1995
Oil on Board

© Michael Flaherty, IVARO Dublin, 2026

MARY SWANZY

Mary Swanzy (1882–1978) is recognised as Ireland's first Cubist painter and her work introduced modernist styles like Cubism and Futurism to Ireland. Born during the Victorian era, Swanzy mastered academic painting in her youth but quickly embraced the avant-garde after witnessing the birth of Modern Art in Paris before World War I. Her Cubist works, such as *Castle*, demonstrate her ability to transform traditional Irish landscapes into dynamic compositions of curved lines, spirals, and interlocking shapes, blending lyrical abstraction with modernist innovation.

Best known for exhibiting at prestigious venues like the *Paris Salon des Indépendants*, Swanzy interpreted global artistic movements

in a deeply personal and original way. Her world travels, including journeys through Eastern Europe, Hawaii, and Samoa, further enriched her work, incorporating proto-feminist themes and critiques of colonialism.

In Irish art history, Swanzy's legacy is particularly significant. As a woman, she broke barriers, paving the way for future generations of female artists to explore modernism and global perspectives. Her ability to navigate both Irish tradition and international innovation remains a testament to her resilience and vision in a society that too often marginalized women's contributions to art.



Castle
c.1930
Oil on Canvas

© Estate of Mary Swanzy, 2026

BARRIE COOKE

Barrie Cooke (1931–2014) was an influential artist known for his deep engagement with the natural world, particularly the landscapes of the West of Ireland. Born in Cheshire, England, Cooke moved to Ireland in 1954 and found lifelong inspiration in its vast terrain, ancient geological formations, and wild beauty.

The West of Ireland, with its shifting skies, boglands, and dramatic coastline, became a central theme in his work, serving as both subject and symbol. Cooke's paintings often emphasize the raw, elemental forces of nature, capturing its vitality and timelessness through sweeping brushstrokes and earthy palettes.

A recurring motif in Cooke's work is his fascination with stones, which he imbued with a sense of permanence and history. For Cooke, stones were more than physical objects; they were witnesses to the passage of time and carriers of memory. His depictions of stones often evoke their spiritual and legendary significance, connecting the viewer to Ireland's ancient past.

Cooke's work combines abstraction with an innate physicality, creating an immersive experience that reflects the power of the landscapes he cherished. As a painter deeply attuned to the West of Ireland's soul, Cooke's art invites us to see the natural world as a source of power, legend, and consonancy.



West of Carran
1978
Oil on Canvas

© Estate of Barrie Cooke, IVARO Dublin, 2026

JACK B. YEATS

Jack B. Yeats (1871-1957) holds a unique place in Irish cultural history. A brother to poet W.B Yeats, Jack was deeply connected to the cultural revival that accompanied the birth of the Free State in 1922. His artworks often reflected themes of Irish resilience, individuality, and pride aligning with the ethos of a newly independent nation.

Born in London to Irish parents, Yeats spent much of his childhood in Sligo with his grandparents, where the landscapes and jovial local life left an indelible mark on his artistic vision. This translated onto his canvas through swirling brushstrokes and thick paint to evoke a semi-abstract composition of competing colours.

He was captivated by temporality and the energy of the people in the region. Momentary events such as horse races, fun fairs, circuses, and other country sporting events became key themes in his work. An example of this is seen in *The Tipster* from 1945. A tipster, originating from the English word “tip”, is someone who provides paid tips, often about likely winners of horse races or sports events.

Initially known for his illustrations and watercolours, Yeats transitioned to oil painting developing a bold, expressive style that captured the vitality and spirit of Irish life. The artist was the first recipient of the Olympic Silver Medal for Painting at the 1924 Paris Olympics, awarded for his work *The Liffey Swim*, which is exhibited at the National Gallery of Ireland in Dublin.



The Tipster
1945
Oil on Board

© Estate of Jack B. Yeats, DACS London / IVARO Dublin, 2026

LOUISE MANSFIELD

Children with Horse, Running

c. 2005

Oil on Canvas

Louise Mansfield (1950–2018) captured the essence of Irish daily life through her artistic oeuvre, often exploring motifs such as children by the sea and young women dancing. Her fluid brushstrokes and distinctive approach to movement and light infuse her canvases with energy and vibrancy. This is exemplified in her piece *Children with Horse, Running*, a semi-abstract composition featuring three youthful figures in playful motion including one atop a horse.

Mansfield employs a meticulous, layered technique - often using oil or graphite - to convey fleeting light and a sense of rhythm. Her amalgamation of simple brushstrokes invites the viewer to engage with the artwork, forming their own interpretations. The fluidity of her paint application spreads across the canvas, embodying the playful energy at the heart of the scene. Within the context of the theme “What is it to be Irish?” the work prompts us to reflect on the essence of Irishness - perhaps found in the nostalgic memory evoked by *Children with Horse, Running*.



LOUIS LE BROCQUY

Louis le Brocquy (1916–2012) was one of Ireland's most distinguished modern painters, whose work often engaged with themes of identity, human spirit, and cultural heritage.

His hauntingly evocative painting *Aran Man* reflects his fascination with the timeless spirit of the West of Ireland, particularly the Aran Islands, a place steeped in myth, isolation, and resilience. The painting belongs to le Brocquy's celebrated "head images" series, inspired by his visit to the Musée de l'Homme in Paris in 1963, where he explored the human face as a profound vessel of inner life and collective memory.

Aran Man captures the essence of the islander, not merely as a physical likeness but as an archetype of endurance and connection to the elemental forces of nature. The austere, monochromatic palette evokes the harsh landscapes of the West, where the interplay of light and shadow mirrors the existential solitude of its inhabitants. Le Brocquy's work resonates with the cultural richness of the region, echoing the oral traditions, folklore, and stoic resilience that define the Aran Islands.

Through *Aran Man*, he bridges the individual and the universal, honouring the spirit of the West of Ireland while contributing to a broader exploration of humanity's shared essence.



Aran Man
1969
Oil on Canvas

© Estate of Louis le Brocquy, IVARO Dublin, 2026

JOHN LAVERY

Sir John Lavery, born in Belfast in 1856, is one of Ireland's most renowned artists. He began his artistic journey in Glasgow, later studying in Paris and the artist colony of Grez-sur-Loing. Lavery excelled in portraits, landscapes, and oil sketches, showcasing a refined mastery of colour harmonies influenced by James Abbott McNeill Whistler and Lavery's travels across Europe and North Africa. His ability to capture elegance and atmosphere earned him acclaim internationally.

Lavery's legacy is deeply tied to his second wife, Hazel Martyn, an American of Irish descent who became his muse, and who he painted over 400 times. Her presence inspired iconic works such as *The Madonna of the Lakes* and this one, in which she is portrayed as Kathleen Ní Houlihan, a traditional personification of Ireland who sought young men to sacrifice themselves in the cause of freedom. This portrait adorned Ireland's banknotes for five decades. Lavery's versatility shone during World War I where he documented wounded soldiers, cementing his status as one of Ireland's great visual storytellers.



Portrait of Lady Lavery as Kathleen Ní Houlihan
1927
Copy

The original artwork from Central Bank of Ireland's collection is on permanent loan to the National Gallery of Ireland

1973: IRELAND JOINS THE EU

1973: AONTACHAS NA HÉIREANN LEIS AN AE

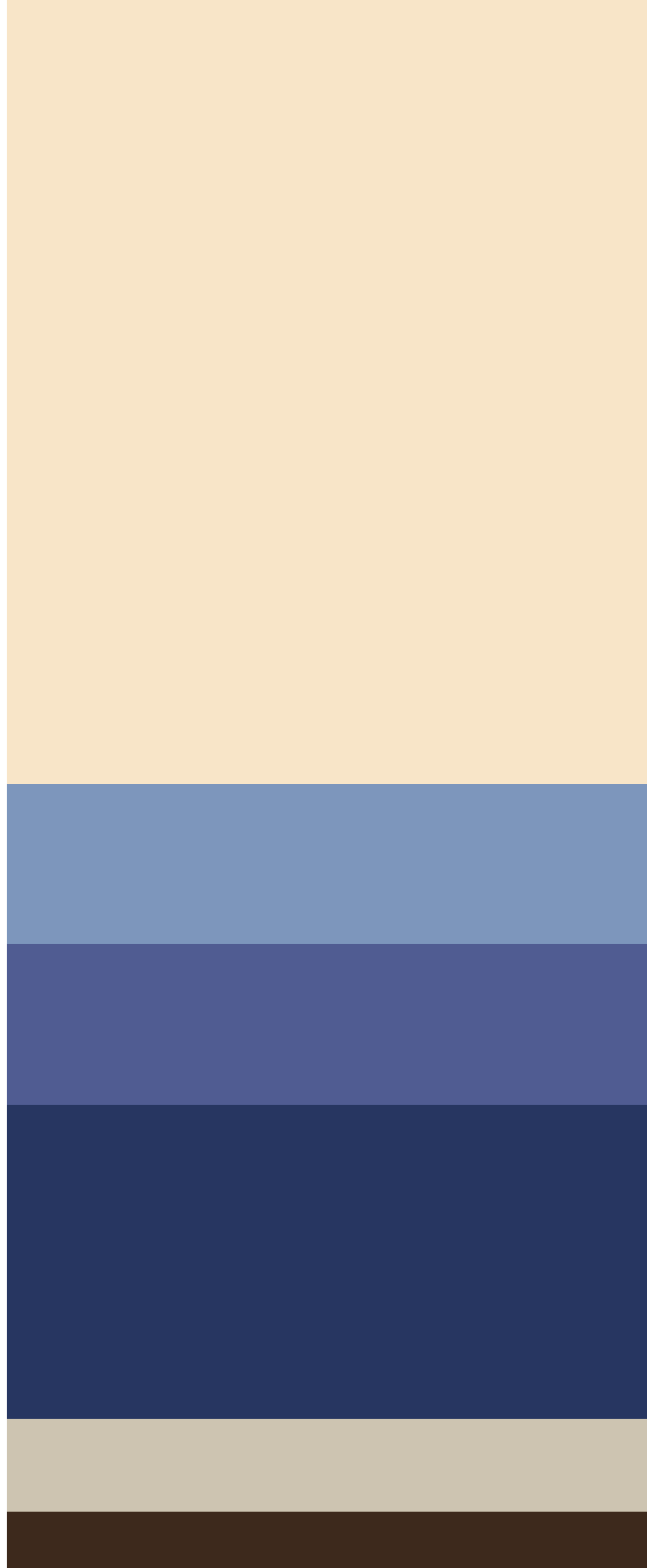
This next part of the exhibition explores Ireland's 1973 accession to the European Economic Community (EEC), a definitive pivot from post-independence toward a modern, continental identity. This era marked a seismic shift in the national consciousness, moving from an inward-looking tradition toward an ambitious European modernity. It was a period of profound aesthetic transition, where the rustic, rural imagery of the previous decades began to merge with a burgeoning urban sophistication.

This visualization of change is captured through the distinct lenses of John Doherty, Maurice MacGonigal, and Michael Boran. We experience the introduction of bold colours and a new fascination with everyday

urban life; from the nostalgic, confectionary glow of Doherty's traditional sweet shops to the kinetic bustle of city life captured in Boran's photography. In MacGonigal's *Night*, there is a palpable, voyeuristic atmosphere of urban residents living in a new social fabric, providing a sense of a nation busily discussing its future in salons, bars and streets.

Across literature and the arts, this period was defined by a desire to speak a more "international" language. While Irish writers home and abroad continued to ground Irish identity in the physical landscape, the visual arts scene was being revolutionized by the ROSC (Irish for "poetry of vision") exhibitions. These landmark shows brought the global avant-garde to Irish shores, prompting artists

to look toward Paris, Brussels, and Berlin for inspiration. As the social fabric modernized and the traditional influence of the church was challenged by a younger, European-oriented generation, 1973 became the pivotal moment when Ireland stopped defining itself solely by what it had been – its history – and began defining itself by what it could be – its future potential.



JOHN DOHERTY

John Doherty (b. 1949) is an Irish artist known for his precise, quietly evocative paintings of shops, petrol stations, rural façades and everyday commercial buildings. Born in Kilkenny, he trained in architecture before turning fully to painting, a background that informs the exacting structure, frontal compositions and careful attention to signage and vernacular detail in his work. Doherty has lived for many years in Sydney, Australia while continuing to return to Ireland as a central subject.

His oeuvre is closely associated with the documentation of Ireland's changing built environment from the 1970s onward. Rather than depicting dramatic events, Doherty records modest places at moments of transition: small businesses, corner shops, garages and village streets poised between continuity and decline.



Byrne's Confectionery
1987
Acrylic on Canvas

© John Doherty, IVARO Dublin, 2026

JOHN DOHERTY

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

His sweet shop paintings from the 1970s and 1980s are particularly significant in this context. These works capture brightly painted storefronts, hand-lettered signs, window displays, and the visual language of local commerce before the widespread homogenisation of retail culture.

Seen today, Doherty's paintings operate as both art and social record. They reflect an Ireland moving toward modernity while still marked by older rhythms, local identities, and communal memory. Through restraint, clarity, and affection for ordinary subjects, Doherty documents the physical and cultural landscapes.



Sweeney's Shop
1988
Oil on Board

© John Doherty, IVARO Dublin, 2026

MICHAEL BORAN

Michael Boran is an Irish artist and photographer whose practice has often focused on the unsung details of everyday life and the ways people inhabit public space. In his photographs, he avoids conventional portraiture: faces are absent or obscured, and attention is placed instead on bodies, movement, clothing, posture, and the fleeting encounters of the street.

An example of this can be seen in his work *In Passing*. The work has a sense of anonymity while also being deeply social. The city appears as a space of constant motion, where individuals briefly share the same environment without necessarily connecting.

In relation to Ireland's society over the last decade, Boran's work can be read against the backdrop of increasingly busy and diverse urban life. Irish cities, particularly Dublin, Cork, and Galway, have been shaped by migration, tourism, redevelopment, consumer culture, and changing patterns of public behaviour. His faceless figures suggest a modern Ireland in which identity is fluid and often anonymous, especially in crowded urban settings. Compared with older ideas of Irish social life based on rural communities, local recognition, and close social networks, Boran's street images reflect a more contemporary experience: people moving through the city together, separate yet connected by the rhythm of public space.



In Passing
2006

Photograph, Lamdachrome

© Michael Boran, IVARO Dublin, 2026

MAURICE MACGONIGAL

Maurice MacGonigal (1900–1979) was a distinguished Irish artist celebrated for his evocative depictions of domestic interiors, still lifes, and landscapes. A graduate of the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art, MacGonigal's work reflects the influence of post-Impressionist European masters like Paul Cézanne with a focus on form, colour, and the quiet beauty of everyday life.

His paintings often capture Irish domestic spaces and relatable scenes of ordinary life, resonating deeply with his audience. One of his notable works, *Night* (1979), purchased by the Central Bank of Ireland shortly before his death, exemplifies his mastery. This oil on canvas depicts a nocturnal urban scene, presumably in Dublin, rendered with rich, moody hues of deep blues and blacks punctuated by warm, glowing lights. The atmospheric composition highlights MacGonigal's ability to balance realism with an almost lyrical softness, drawing viewers into the quiet mystery and stillness of Irish life after dark.



Night
mid 20th Century
Oil on Canvas

© Estate of Maurice MacGonigal, IVARO Dublin 2026

META-MODERN IRELAND

ÉIRE MHEITEA-NUA-AOISEACH

In the 21st Century, Ireland underwent a profound transformation. It was simultaneously transformed and unsettled by seismic change. This change included unprecedented wealth for some, a financial crisis which touched most, and a re-imagining of Irish identity as a diverse and socially liberal nation. Its outward-looking nature remained a constant, though this continued to be a complex feature of the national experience, with Irish people doing as they always have done – seeking inspiration, opportunity, and prosperity often far beyond their shores.

Contemporary Irish artists have been deeply attuned to the energy, contradictions, and

aspirations of this period, creating works that reflect the duality of a country rooted in heritage while navigating its evolving role in a globalised, interconnected Europe. Their art serves as a mirror to Ireland's transformation, exploring themes of identity, migration, connectivity, and resilience.

As Ireland's cultural influence expanded during this era, its artists began to gain widespread recognition across Europe, exhibiting in prestigious venues such as the Venice Biennale, cutting-edge galleries in London, Paris, Berlin and further afield, and the European Central Bank's contemporary art collection.

The artists represented here reflect different dimensions of the national experience. Amy O’Riordan captures the dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity, exploring the fluid boundaries of Irish identity in an increasingly globalised world. Kathy Prendergast’s work similarly engages with questions of mapping, belonging, and place, resonating with Ireland’s navigation of its role within Europe and a more interconnected international community. Together, their work speaks to a society redefining itself while remaining conscious of its cultural inheritance.

Other artists offer perspectives on the opportunities and tensions that accompanied this transformation. Caroline McCarthy uses consumer materials, optical illusion, and trompe-l’œil techniques to examine

ideas of value, authenticity, and desire, reflecting both the optimism and excess of the Celtic Tiger era and the disillusionment that followed. Brian Maguire confronts the social realities that accompanied economic change, addressing themes of inequality, migration, and marginalisation, and reminding us of the human consequences. In contrast, Michael Craig-Martin’s bold conceptual works celebrate the confidence, connectivity, and visual language of contemporary life. Viewed together, these artists present a nuanced portrait of modern Ireland: outward-looking and innovative, yet continually questioning the social, cultural, and economic forces that have shaped its recent history.

AMY O'RIORDAN

Amy O'Riordan's *Candy Stripes* is a vibrant photograph featuring sling-back heels in Pride Flag colours, paired with lime green fishnet socks and ruffled edges. While it makes a bold fashion statement, the artwork also celebrates the LGBTQ+ community, referencing the rainbow flag's origins as a symbol of gay rights activism in San Francisco in 1978. Part of O'Riordan's *Eye Candy* series, the piece explores themes of femininity, identity, and societal perceptions of young women.

O'Riordan is known for her performative approach to art, embracing clichés and exaggerated femininity through staged photography involving friends, herself, and models from her immediate circle. Her work balances playfulness with critique, examining female relationships, self-expression, and the ritual of dressing-up. These carefully composed scenes blur the boundaries

between the everyday and the fantastical, portraying women who both challenge and embrace their objectification, reclaiming agency through their presence and gaze.

Set in early 2000s Ireland, *Candy Stripes* reflects a society grappling with its traditional Catholic roots while becoming more open to progressive movements. LGBTQ+ rights were gaining visibility, yet resistance persisted. O'Riordan's work celebrates empowerment and self-expression while questioning norms around gender and identity.

Drawing inspiration from historical art and pop culture icons like Cindy Sherman and *Sex and the City*, O'Riordan's photographs anticipate the rise of social media as a space for self-dramatization and empowerment. *Candy Stripes* captures a generation redefining femininity and identity during a transformative moment in Irish culture.



Candy Stripes

2004

Lambda print on aluminium

© European Central Bank 2026

BRIAN MAGUIRE

Brian Maguire is an Irish contemporary artist from Dublin, born in 1951. He studied at Dún Laoghaire School of Art and later at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin, where he also became an important teacher and professor. Maguire is best known for his politically engaged painting, which focuses on human rights, conflict, violence, and social injustice. His work often gives visibility to people and communities who are ignored or marginalised by society.

Maguire's style is expressive, raw, and emotionally direct. He uses strong colour, loose brushwork, and large-scale compositions to create images that feel urgent and powerful. His technique often

combines painting with research, interviews, travel, and direct engagement with the people whose experiences he represents. He works like a journalist.

Rather than making art only for aesthetic pleasure, Maguire uses painting as a form of witness and protest. His oeuvre is rooted in empathy and social responsibility, asking viewers to confront uncomfortable realities. Within contemporary Irish art, Maguire stands out as an artist who connects Ireland to global issues of suffering, power, and justice.



Forever There

1996

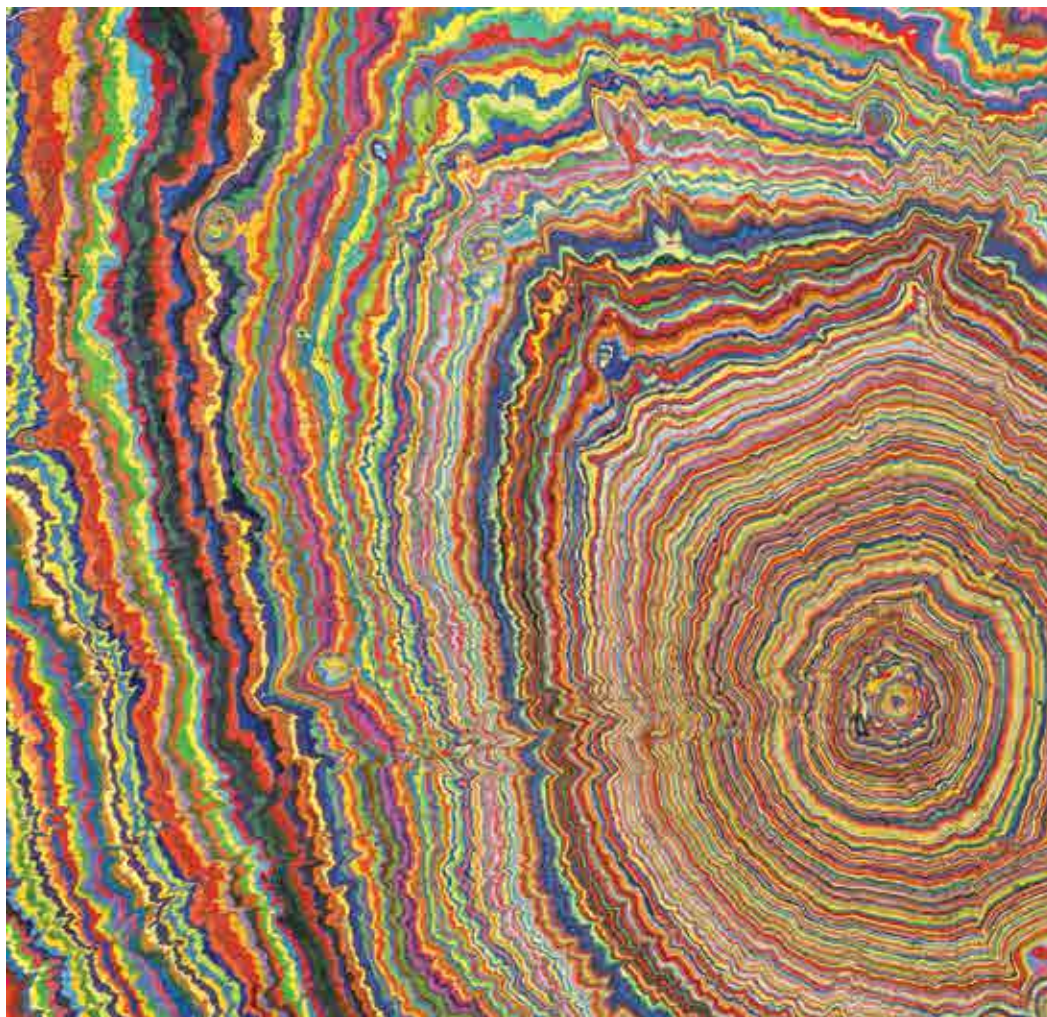
Acrylic on Canvas

© European Central Bank and VG Bildkunst, Bonn, 2026

KATHY PRENDERGAST

Kathy Prendergast is one of Ireland's most significant contemporary artists, known for her subtle yet powerful exploration of mapping, belonging, memory, and identity. Born in Dublin in 1958, her work often uses maps, drawings, and delicate sculptural forms to question how people understand place and how identity is shaped by geography, history, and personal experience. Rather than presenting maps as fixed or objective, Prendergast transforms them into emotional and psychological landscapes, suggesting that place is never neutral but deeply connected to memory and selfhood.

Her work resonates strongly with Ireland's own evolving sense of identity, particularly as the country has negotiated its position within a wider European and global context. In pieces such as her Atlas maps, familiar territories are stripped back, redrawn, or reimagined, reflecting uncertainty, displacement, and the search for belonging. This can be seen as mirroring Ireland's movement from a more insular national identity toward a more outward-looking, interconnected society.



Fujidelic

2017

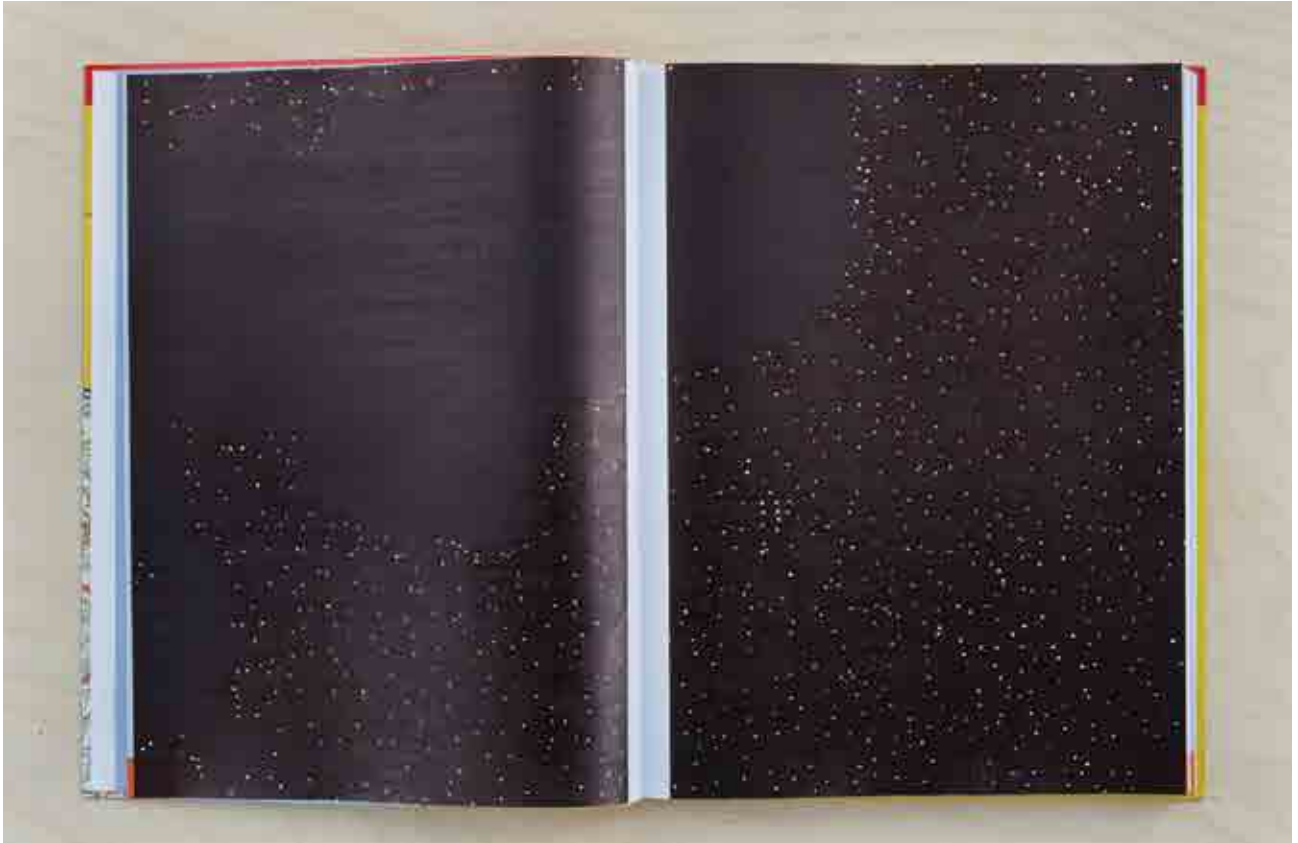
Glicee Print, edition 2/25

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KATHY PRENDERGAST

(CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE)

In *Atlas 11 Le Havre, Paris*, she meticulously traces over the map of Paris, removing all text and markers of navigation, leaving only the delicate web of streets and pathways. The result is an intricate, almost organic landscape that transforms the city into a universal yet deeply personal terrain. By stripping away identifiers, Prendergast invites viewers to rethink their relationship to place, suggesting that maps are not just tools of orientation but repositories of memory, emotion, and identity. Her reworked Paris becomes a meditative exploration of belonging and the fluidity of selfhood within the geography of urban space.



Atlas 11 Le Havre, Paris
2017

AA Road Atlas of Europe, Ink (Le Havre, Paris)

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CAROLINE MCCARTHY

Caroline McCarthy is an Irish contemporary artist from Dublin, known for her playful and clever use of everyday objects and consumer materials. She studied at the National College of Art and Design (NCAD) in Dublin, where she developed an interest in transforming ordinary materials into visually surprising artworks. Her artistic oeuvre often explores themes of illusion, value, consumer culture, and perception, making viewers question what they are really seeing.

McCarthy's work is strongly connected to trompe-l'oeil, a technique that "tricks the eye" by making one material appear like another. She often uses cheap or disposable objects, such as plastic bags, packaging, or household items, and carefully reshapes or

arranges them so they resemble something more luxurious or permanent. This playful transformation creates a tension between appearance and reality.

Her style is witty, precise, and visually striking, often combining humour with social commentary. In the context of post-2000 Ireland, especially after the Celtic Tiger, her work reflects a culture shaped by consumption, desire, excess, and later disillusionment. By elevating ordinary materials into art, McCarthy questions ideas of worth, authenticity, and taste. Her work fits within a meta-modern Irish context because it balances irony and sincerity, using humour while also reflecting seriously on contemporary Irish identity.



Helter Skelter
2016
Acrylic on Canvas

© European Central Bank 2026

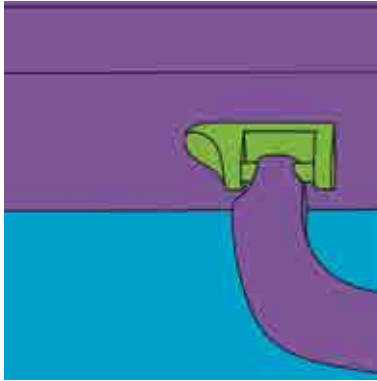
MICHAEL CRAIG-MARTIN

Michael Craig-Martin, one of the most influential artists and teachers from his generation, was born in Dublin, Ireland, in 1941. He was educated in the United States where he studied at Yale University, taking courses on colour, drawing and design, pioneered by the artist Josef Albers (1888-1976). Craig-Martin returned to Europe in the 1960s, to take up a teaching position before settling in London where he had his first solo exhibition in 1969.

Craig-Martin was a key mentoring figure to the first generation of British conceptualist artists. His installation, *An Oak Tree*, 1973, one of the artist's best-known early works, questioned the nature of art and representation.

Over the next fifty years, Craig-Martin developed a distinctive style by depicting everyday objects in precise, uninflected lines, later introducing his signature bold colours in the 1990s. He works across painting, sculpture, drawing, printmaking and digital formats to reinvent the way we view familiar items.

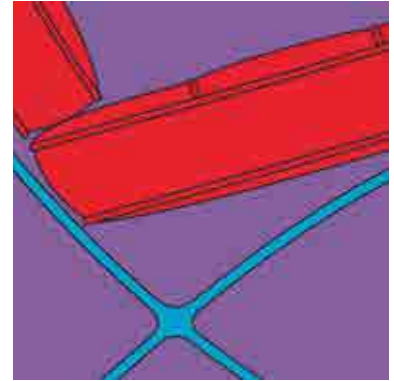
In *Fragments*, 2015, Craig-Martin focuses on details, such as the handle of a briefcase or the edge of a takeaway coffee cup; each object remains recognisable despite the fact it's only partly revealed. Craig-Martin's work is a conceptual exploration of looking and seeing.



Briefcase



Lightbulb



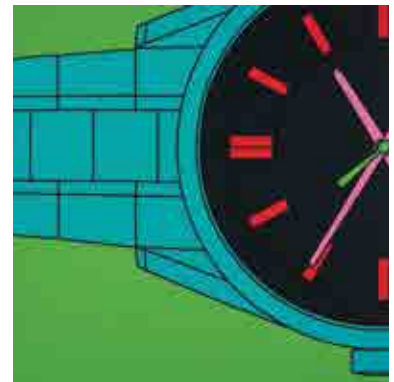
Chair



Coffee Cup



Headphones



Watch

From the series 'Fragments'

2015

Prints x 6

Curatorial Concept | Coincheap na hEalaíne

Niamh Coughlan, Duncan Cripps

Catalogue Design Concept & Catalogue Design | Catalóg – Coincheap Dearaidh agus Dearadh Catalóige

Naomi Kelly

Organisation | Eagrú an imeachta

Duncan Cripps, Niamh Coughlan, Markus Auer, Sonia Cuchillo, Leonardo Boccafurni, Sharon Smith, Ronan Sheridan, Entela Lenja, María Gonzalez Carretero, Marta Cappelli, Mikko Paajanen, Malachy Neeson, Oisín Horgan, Francesca Iappelli, Sandra Burgstaller, Judith Daniels, Thomas Becker, Andreas Stroh, John Spotswood, Fabrice Grivet, Caroline Mehigan, Rachel Ward, Steven Cull, Sonya Felton, Naomi Kelly, Shonagh Darroch, Des Lane, Barbara McKenna, Kate Flood, Pío Stack.

Special thanks to Member of the ECB Executive Board, Mr Philip Lane and Member of the ECB Supervisory Board Ms Sharon Donnelly for their support to this exhibition. Finally, many thanks to Cristina San Agapito in her role as Chair of the ECB Art Committee.



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Ealaín ó bhailiúcháin

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an Bhainc Ceannais Eorpaigh